

# Photographing on those Grey Days

It's winter in Ontario. If it's sunny the light is very bright, it brings out the colours. But it's cold..... if your battery doesn't go flat, your fingers drop off. Or it's a Grey Day.... warmer, but the light doesn't look so good.... at first thought. On top of that, the days are pretty short with the winter solstice only weeks behind us. Once in a while we get a nice sunset when that hot ball of gas is kind enough to break beneath the clouds when they aren't looking, not to be seen for another 14 hours.

For the most part, though, it's more often grey for long periods. But you're a photographer and you like to get out of the house and do some outdoor shooting. You won't see any sun drenched beaches, or nearby mountains glowing orange at sunrise or lush green fields and bright red barns shimmering in the sunlight. That doesn't mean grey skies are no good for photography - you just have to be a bit more creative. So here's a few ideas of what and how to shoot on a grey day.

## Live With It And Learn From It

Sometimes the world appears dull, lifeless, flat. That's just the way it is on these days and it's nothing to complain about, it's simply the way it is. Well, maybe if you have a shoot for a swimsuit calendar and need a sunny beach, you can complain. But chances are you would have headed South. You're not there, you are here, in the greyness.

Rather than letting your mind glaze over at the dullness of it all, go with it. Take a critical look around your settings and pick apart what's different in this light. Photography is all about light and you have light, you simply need to take a different approach to using this type of light. The grey light is much softer than the harsh light of a sunny day - and what do we always say about what kind of light suits portraits, macros, still-life etc.? Yes, it's very useful - and the actual amount of light is irrelevant - you just get different exposure values. But the highlights are less likely to be burnt out and the shadows can retain more detail... in fact, the more you think of it, for the purposes of photography this grey light is fantastic!

## The Shoreline

In our case, the Lake. No reason to avoid it. Most of us live relatively close to the lake. It takes on a different appearance or mood when the sky is not blue and the water clear.

During grey days, water that stretches to the horizon will mingle with the sky, sometimes making one continuous spectrum. The shadows in the rocks and driftwood (in these parts) are softer and more life can often be spotted.

## Close up

Grey days are an excellent time to break out the macro lens. Why? Because of the even lighting close-up subjects will receive. Think of it as Nature's built in light-tent. Yes, there is less light in general, requiring a slower shutter, for instance. But you camera can take care of that and the evenness of the tones without having to shade your subject is a great way to spend a grey day.

## Think B&W

If the world around you seems lifeless and dismal in the grey light, show that! There will be time enough for colourful photos when Summer rolls around. Now is a great time to touch up on the [Zone System](#) when colours are more muted and easier to understand in regards to that system. If the world around seems black and white, start using that to your advantage and practice more black and white photography. Think in terms of shape and composition - sometimes even a colour shot can look monochrome on a grey day.

## The Industrial Side of Town

Take the B&W idea to the industrial or run-down side of town and work the grain there. Shadows are typically reduced on grey days and more details can be brought out of dilapidated old buildings and factories. This isn't the sunny, happy side of town, typically, and it is well represented in the shades brought about by evenness of diffused light.

## Conclusion

Gray days don't have to end your shooting impulses. It does take some people more motivation to take photos on the blandest of days, but there is still a whole world out there begging to be seen in a new light. Don't miss your chance!

There again, if it's grey *and* cold, you can be excused for staying indoors.... where you'll find plenty of entertainment in Still Life, Portraits of the family and pets, Macros....